

John Joseph Lackovic

b. Dec. 4, 1917 _ Guttenberg, N.J.

Registered for draft: Oct. 16, 1940 (22 yrs. of age) _ Worked for Elevator Engineering Co. _ Bronx, N.Y.

Enlisted in the Army: Mar. 4, 1942 _ Fort Dix, N.J. _ 147 lbs., 5' 10".
Employment category: Semiskilled construction operations.

Then Army Air Corps. recruit training consisted of: (1) basic training (2) technical training (3) unit training. Basic training variably lasted 3-6 weeks consisting of the following subjects:

- Issuance Clothing and Equipment
- Articles of War
- Military Courtesy
- Sex Hygiene
- Hygiene and Sanitation
- First Aid
- Care and Display of Equipment
- Interior Guard Duty
- Defense for Chemical Attack
- Dismounted Drill/Physical Training
- Pistol Marksmanship
- Vaccination and Immunization
- Classification and Trade Testing

The next milestone on the road to becoming an aircraft mechanic was technical training. All future mechanics attended the basic aircraft maintenance course. This level of training familiarized personnel with aircraft features, servicing, towing, and general maintenance. This course lasted about 8 weeks, and was initially taught only at Chanute Field, Illinois. Afterwards there were more specialized courses and more training locations.

After technical training Army Air Force members were ready to join their operational squadron for further unit training.

46th Pursuit Squadron (1942 changed to Fighter Squadron (FS)) was activated Dec 1940, and stationed at

Wheeler Field, TH (Territory of Hawaii) _ Dec. 1940. Assigned to the 15th Pursuit (later Fighter Group (FG)) Group. VII Fighter Command. On the morning of 7 December 1941 bombing and strafing attacks by carrier-based planes of the Japanese strike force destroyed many of the Group's assigned aircraft and caused heavy casualties. However, twelve of the group's pilots succeeded in launching their Curtiss P-36 Hawk and Curtiss P-40 Warhawk aircraft from Wheeler and Haleiwa Fighter Strip, and flew 16 sorties, destroying 10 Japanese planes. The 46th got nicknamed "Skyriders".

46th Pursuit Squadron stationed at Hickam Field, TH, 6 Feb 1942. Re-equipped initially with [P-39 Aircobras](#) and [P-40 Warhawks](#), its primary mission was the air defense of the Hawaiian Islands and to patrol the Pacific

46th Fighter Squadron (FS) stationed at Mokuleia, TH, 22 May 1942.

[Insert 46th Fighter Squadron/46 FIGHTER TRAINING SD. p4 patch at bottom of page]

46th FS stationed at Hilo Field (TH), 12 Dec 1942-19 Mar 1943

15th FG are rotating units to forward deployment.

46th FS stationed at Canton Island (Phoenix Islands Republic of Kiribati)), popularly called "Isle of Atonement," 27 Mar 1943. Proved to be the 46th's real Baptism of Fire because those months were to be filled with alarms, excursions, and deprivations. Despite the numerous attempts made by the Japanese to bomb out the squadron on Canton Island, the obscurity of the island coupled with the concentrated ack-ack fire thrown at them, resulted in very few successful missions for the Nipponese pilots.

[Insert map Battles and Stations/Canton Island Airport p1 or insert Battles & Stations/
makin island - Google Maps.pdf]

Battle of Makin Island _ November 20, 1943, to November 24, 1943. U.S. captured Makin Island as well as neighbouring Tarawa island, during the Gilbert Islands campaign.

Word came early in December 1943 that the 46th squadron was to leave the isle of atonement for more active duty in the central Pacific combat area. The squadron arrived at

its new station,
Butaritari Island, Makin Atoll, on 18 December 1943, just twenty seven days after the invasion of the Gilbert Islands. During their two month stay, the squadron was actively engaged in providing fighter support in bombing missions over Mille Island in order to render that island useless to the enemy and to pave the way for the American Invasion of Kwajalein Atoll on the 31st of January 1944. While at Butaritari, the 46th participated in more than 400 sorties, bombing and strafing all major objectives in the Marshalls', escorting medium and heavy bombers and flying in rescue and reconnaissance missions. The "Skyriders" employed the first intruder tactics used in the Pacific, intercepting enemy bombers upon their return from bombing the fighters' base.

[Insert 46th Fighter Squadron/46th Fighter Squadron _ Military Wiki _ p1 P39-Qs of the 46th.

46th FS return to home base at Wheeler Field, TH, 17 Feb 1944. They're re-equipped with very long-range [P-38 Lightnings](#) and [P-51D Mustangs](#). The months back at Wheeler were spent in rehabilitating the base, ironing out supply problems, and keeping the squadron on alert status for possible movements to advanced posts in the Pacific area They began training for very long range bomber escort missions.

46th FS transferred to the 21st Fighter Group (FG), 15 Jun 1944.

46th Fighter Squadron (FS) stationed at Mokuleia Field, TH, 13 Oct 1944.

True to rumor, leading echelons of the 21st FG began deploying by ship to the island of Iwo Jima in the western Pacific in February 1945. Before the end of the month, the 21st began flying patrols over the critical island base in support of ground operations.

Feb 9th, 1945. Uncle John is aboard the escort carrier U.S.S. Hollandia. The Hollandia is sailing from a port outside continental U.S. to dangerous waters. It is transporting replacement aircraft and military personnel to the front lines. He is now a Staff Sergeant with the 46th Fighter Squadron. His MOS is Aircraft Maintenance Technician (Mechanic). He is

traveling with other staff sergeants and members of his unit.
[Insert Hollandia Pictures/ U.S.S._Hollandia_(CVE-97)jpg]

Battle for Iwo Jima_Feb 19-Mar 17, 1945. Iwo Jima, whose name was unknown to the vast majority of American citizens, was to become associated in most minds with the U.S. Marines who took it foot by foot with rifle and grenade and flamethrower; but the sole purpose of the campaign was to provide an advanced base for the strategic bombardment of Japan.

46th FS stationed at [Central Field, Iwo Jima](#), 26 March 1945. On Iwo Jima the unit experienced actual ground warfare in resisting Japanese sniper infiltrations, which on at least one occasion reached the proportions of open battle. By the end of March, the aircraft of the 46th were engaged in combat missions over nearby Chichi Jima and Haba Jima.

On 7 April 1945, 119 P-51 Mustangs of VII Fighter Command lifted off from Iwo Jima on the first Very Long Range (VLR) mission by land-based fighter aircraft against the Japanese mainland. Off the coast of Honshu they rendezvoused with more than 100 B-29 Superfortresses for an attack on the Nakajima aircraft plant in Tokyo. The B-29s had been taking heavy losses to Japanese fighters on these Empire strikes, but the 110 to 125 who came up to greet them this day were in for a surprise.

VII Fighter command pilots described the Japanese, who attacked singly during the bomb run and immediately after, as easy targets for the Mustangs that broke off in pairs to engage them. Combined, the American fighters and bombers accounted for 71 Japanese aircraft destroyed, with 30 probably destroyed of the 44 that were damaged. Over the following months the 21st escorted American B-29s over enemy airfields and industrial targets and engaged rival Japanese fighter aircraft. The 46th received the Distinguished Unit Citation for its bombing escorts over Japan on 7 Apr 1945.

[Insert AAF_WWII_TEXT/v.5_AAF_WWII_.pdf p. 644 P-51s in Iwo Jima]

[Insert Planes/North American P-51 Mustang . . . pdf pg10]

46th FS stationed at [South Field, Iwo Jima](#), 15 July 1945. During the summer of 1945, the 15th Fighter Group (along with the 21st Fighter Group and the VII Fighter Command) were reassigned to Twentieth Air Force. The group

continued its fighter sweeps against Japanese airfields and other targets, in addition to flying long-range B-29 Superfortress escort missions to Japanese cities, until the end of the war.

The 21st FG flew its last combat mission 14 August 1945, about two weeks before the official Japanese capitulation on 2 September. The group received the Distinguished Unit Citation on 13 November 1945 specifically for its outstanding conduct during the earlier raid on Nakajima. However, the 21st had played a laudable part throughout the final stages of the war in the Pacific.

John Joseph Lackovic is discharged from the Service: Oct. 27, 1945.

[The Army Air Forces Historical Studies noted, "In popular imagination it is the members of the aircrews -- particularly the pilots -- who are the heroes of aerial warfare. Yet everyone familiar with the reality of the situation -- especially pilots and their crew members -- realizes his dependence upon the glamorless airplane mechanic, the lowly grease mechanic." Remember, <i>Pilots without maintenance are just pedestrians with sunglasses and a cool jacket!]

d. Feb. 2, 1974 _ 56 yrs. of Age.